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HELD UP BY THE SENATE.

INDIAN SERVICE SAID TO BE SUFFERING FROM PETTY POLITICS.

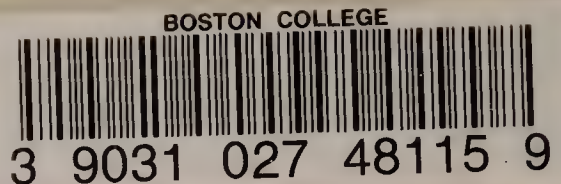
GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL DENOUNCES THE PRACTICE
WHICH MAKES GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS THE
PERQUISITES OF UNITED STATES SENATORS.

To the Editor of THE TRIBUNE.

SIR:—Whatever may have been the mistakes or shortcomings of the present Administration, there is substantial agreement among persons interested in such matters that Indian affairs have never been so well conducted as during the last two or three years. The Secretary of the Interior and his office and the Indian Bureau and its office seem to have made an honest effort toward a better treatment of the Indians and a more business-like conduct of Indian affairs.

The aim of the present Indian administration has been to get the best service possible out of its employees; and where an individual in whatever position has proved himself interested and efficient in that position, an effort has been made to continue his services and so to take advantage of the experience that he has accumulated in his past work. Where practicable, employees have been put under the civil service rules, and the man who has shown himself a good farmer has been advanced to be a clerk, or a good clerk has been advanced to be an agent. In other words, the old practice of turning a man out just as soon as he

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had learned the business of his position has been stopped, and the faithful and efficient employees of the Indian Bureau, like the employees of a great corporation, have been promoted. The result of this has been constant improvement in the class of employees and a more efficient service.

All this, of course, while for the good of the country at large, and especially for the good of the Indians, has not been for the good of the spoilsmen or the place-hunters, and the result of the dissatisfaction among the politicians has at last taken the active shape of neglect or refusal by the Senate to confirm many excellent appointments that have been made.

AN ABUSE OF SENATORIAL COURTESY.

The politicians in the Senate take the ground that the offices in connection with the Indian agencies in any State belong to the Senators from that State. Positions under the Indian Bureau for agencies in Wyoming, Nebraska, or one of the Dakotas are regarded as personal perquisites of the Senators from the States in which the agency is situated. The Senators desire such places for their own constituents, for the men who do their political work, who blow their political trumpets and beat their political drums and run their political conventions. A man may have made a splendid record for himself as sub-agent at an agency in Nebraska, but if the Indian Bureau promotes him to be agent at some place in Dakota, the Senate, out of misnamed Senatorial courtesy for the Senator from Dakota, declines to confirm his appointment. No way could be devised, perhaps, by which the real improvement of the Indian Service could be more discouraged than by this.

The work of carrying on an Indian agency is a business, and, like any other business, it will be most successfully conducted by one who is fitted for the work by a special training. That a man who has had such a training can attend to it more efficiently than one who knows nothing of it and has everything to learn would seem to be self-evident. A man whose business education has been that of an architect would not expect suddenly to take charge of a bank and at once become a great financier. Moreover, the handling of Indians requires a special

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experience, for, as is now pretty well understood, Indians are very different in their ways of thought and in their point of view from civilized men. Some time is required for association with and study of Indians before their mental attitude is comprehended, and until one has reached an understanding of this attitude he misunderstands and is misunderstood ; his labor is in vain.

It is, therefore, highly desirable that men whose records show that they are interested in their work among Indians, and that this work has been efficient, should be continued in their places, and, where the circumstances justify it, advanced, rather than that new men, of whose experience and fitness nothing is known, should be appointed to the places. If the first system should be honestly carried on for a few years the ranks of the Indian Service would be filled with a selected lot of public servants, chosen and promoted for their efficiency, and for no other reason, and the result of such a selection would speedily show itself in the rapid progress of our Indians toward civilization and self-support, and in the reduction of the amount of money which is appropriated for their subsistence and education.

PAYING POLITICAL DEBTS.

Yet the hardy patriots who represent us in the United States Senate want their political work done, and in some form or other this work must be paid for. But these Senators would never think of paying for it out of their own pockets. They prefer the good old American method of paying small political workers by small offices, and so hire their henchmen to be paid for services to them by Government salaries for which the hard-working people of the country are taxed. Thus work, which, to be done properly, requires honest effort and an active interest, is turned over to men who want the positions, not so that they may do honest work in them, but because in these positions they can get greater salaries for less work than in other callings.

It is with these offices just as it has been with others in this country for many years, and the old story has been told a thousand times ; but in the Indian Service the employment of bad and incompetent men does greater harm than in other

branches of the public service ; the advancement of the Indians is indefinitely put off, they are still further injured by the added discouragement which each year of retrogression or of stationary condition brings, and the money appropriated for the purpose of starting them in the way of earning their own livelihood is wasted.

There are now before the Senate awaiting confirmation several appointments of Indian agents which are being " held up, " as the phrase is, for no other reason, as it is believed, than that the different appointees do not come from the States in which the various agencies to which they have been appointed are situated. The history and qualifications of some of the appointees are worth studying.

CASES IN POINT.

The first case is that of George H. Newman, of Fayetteville, Tenn., who was recently appointed agent at the Colville Agency, in Washington, to take the place of Captain J. W. Budd, relieved. Mr. Newman was appointed in March, 1894, special agent to remove the upper and middle bands of Spokane Indians to the Cœur d'Alene Reservation, in Idaho, according to an agreement concluded with them in March, 1887, and ratified by Congress in 1892. Since that appointment he has been engaged in his work on the Spokane and Cœur d'Alene Reservations, and he finished his work of special agent in August, 1895, in a manner satisfactory to the Indian Office, as shown by the last annual report, in which the Commissioner says:—

" In my report of last year I referred to the work then in progress of removing the upper and middle bands of Spokane Indians to the respective reservations to which they were entitled to go, under the agreement concluded with them March 18, 1887, ratified by act of July 13, 1892 (27 Stats., 120). That work has since been finished, and in a manner very satisfactory to the office. There have been removed to and located upon the Spokane Reservation, Washington, 199 Spokanes; on the Cœur d'Alene Reservation, Idaho, 27; on the Flathead Reservation, Montana, 107, making a total of 433. Those removed to Spokane include the band of Enoch, forty-two in number, and those to Cœur d'Alene, Louie's band, thirty-seven in number, who were very reluctant to go. Houses have been built for the respective Indian families at a cost of about \$200 each,

and other things provided for in their agreement have been furnished as far as funds were available.

“Much time, trouble, and diplomacy were required to induce the Indians to leave their old homes around the town of Spokane and in that vicinity and accept the provisions of the agreement ratified so long after it was concluded with them, and I am gratified to announce the completion of the work. Now that the Indians have settled upon the reservations of their choice, selected homes for themselves, and improved the same with the money due them, it is thought that they will make a start in the direction of self-support and general improvement, and materially better their condition.”

Mr. Newman's appointment as agent was petitioned for by the Indians of the Colville and Cœur d'Alene Reservations, as well as by citizens of the city of Spokane. The appointment is still held up.

Another case is that of John C. Keenan, of Indiana, who was appointed agent at Neah Bay Agency, in Washington, to fill the place made vacant by the death of W. L. Powell. Mr. Keenan was for several years in the Indian Service in Oklahoma, and in that time gained much valuable experience, which makes him peculiarly fitted for the duties of Indian agent. He was employed as superintendent of the Kaw School and had charge of that sub-agency, having general management and supervision of the Kaw Indians during the administration of Thomas P. Smith as agent at the Osage Agency, Oklahoma, in 1888-89. Mr. Smith, who is now Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs, says that Mr. Keenan was capable and efficient, discharging the duties of his position in a highly satisfactory manner, and is an active, straightforward, and energetic man.

He was recommended for the position of agent at Neah Bay on account of his efficiency and special fitness for the place, his assignment to duty at Neah Bay being in the nature of transfer and promotion, and not of an original appointment. The salary of the agent at Neah Bay is only \$200 a year more than that of clerk in charge at the Kaw sub-agency. The responsibilities of an agent are much greater than those of a clerk in charge, and for this reason Mr. Keenan was very reluctant to accept the change, and only did so under strong pressure from his superior officers. He has been in charge at Neah Bay and awaiting the

confirmation of his appointment since July, 1895, and his administration of affairs there has up to this time been able, conservative, and satisfactory to the Indian Office. No cause except politics is known for the continued holding up of this appointment.

Luke C. Hays was appointed last September agent for the Indians at the Fort Belknap Agency, in Montana, and his nomination is still awaiting confirmation by the Senate. He is a Kentuckian, and was first appointed as overseer at Crow Creek Agency, South Dakota, in March, 1886. Later in the year he was promoted to be storekeeper and overseer, and resigned from that position in January, 1891. In July, 1893, he was appointed clerk in charge at the Lower Brule sub-agency, and served in that position, having general management and charge of the Lower Brule Sioux until September, when he resigned to take charge of the Fort Belknap Agency, Montana, on receiving his appointment. In all the positions which he has filled in the Indian Service Mr. Hays has shown marked ability, and his services have been always satisfactory to the Indian Office. His handling of the Lower Brule Sioux was remarkably successful, and they made great progress while under his care. His appointment as agent at Belknap was not sought by Mr. Hays, but the Commissioner of Indian Affairs recommended him for the place because of his excellent record and his special fitness for the position. As in the case of Mr. Newman, his assignment to duty as agent at Fort Belknap is in the nature of a transfer and a promotion rather than an original appointment. His salary as agent there is only a little more than he received as clerk-in-charge at Lower Brule.

F. Glenn Mattoon was appointed United States Indian Agent at Fort Berthold, N. D., in October, 1895, and his appointment is still "held up." He was appointed to take the place of Captain W. H. Clapp, transferred to Pine Ridge Agency, S. D. Mr. Mattoon has been in the Indian Service since the summer of 1892, having been appointed farmer at Fort Berthold in July. He remained there as farmer until March 1, 1894, when he was appointed chief clerk. Since that time he was almost continuously at the agency as chief clerk until his appointment as agent last October, and his services have been in all respects highly

satisfactory. When it was known that Captain Clapp was to be transferred to Pine Ridge, he wrote to recommend Mr. Mattoon for the position he was leaving in the following words: "Mr. Mattoon is thirty-five years old, of fine address, affable and courteous, and has intimate knowledge of the work and of the individual Indians on the reservation. If appointed agent he will carry out the policy pursued by the present Agent without any changes or breaks. Having in view the welfare and progress of the Indians, no better man could be found for the place."

The long-continued delay in confirming these appointments is utterly without good reason, and greatly hampers the Indian Office in its efforts to conduct the Indian Service to the best advantage. That the United States Senate should be engaged in such small business as hindering the betterment of the Indian Service for the sake of a few petty offices is discouraging enough. Yet, while it seems altogether out of character with the traditions of that august body, it is not out of character with much of its conduct in these latter and degenerate days. The Indian Service is one in which politics should play no part. We have 250,000 people whom we are trying to make self-supporting, civilized, and citizens, and this work should not be hindered by peanut politics.

GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL.

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